

INTERNATIONAL SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSON

(By E. O. SELLERS, Director of Evening Department, The Moody Bible Institute, Chicago.)

LESSON FOR NOVEMBER 23

JOSHUA THE NEW LEADER.

LESSON TEXT—Joshua 1:1-9
GOLDEN TEXT—"Be strong and of good courage." Joshua 1:9

"Now it came to pass" (v. 1). Things do not happen in the kingdom of God, they "come to pass." This world, nations, families or individuals were not set in motion by a creator who has gone off neglectful of his creatures, nor has he left them to blind fate or inflexible law. Attention is also drawn to the time, "after the death of Moses."

The call was clear and unquestioned, for the Lord "spoke." Our highest responsibility is to that call which comes from the highest source of authority. This call came in the time of great need, Israel is without a leader. Then follow the first words of Jehovah to this newly chosen leader (v. 2) and which constitute his charge, "Moses my servant is dead, now, therefore arise." This suggests a prayerful attitude on the part of Joshua, but in no way is it to be construed that Moses was a hindrance to this forward march of the people of God. Rather, that Moses' work was completed and on the basis of his work an advance was to be made.

Obedience to Law.

The conditions laid upon Joshua were: (1) Confidence due to this promise of the presence of Jehovah (v. 5). The personal pronoun "I" is used seven times in these nine verses as though God would make confidence doubly assured. But confidence alone was not enough, hence the necessity of "courage" (v. 6). Strength is due to confidence and quietness, Isa. 30:15, but courage is the active principle which is the evidence of our strength and courage. Conquest was not alone conditioned upon courage (v. 6), but also upon the sure foundation of the word and oath of Jehovah. But strength and courage are maintained by obedience to law whether it be physical, civil or spiritual, hence the words of verse 7, the possession of this land depended upon absolute unflinching, invariable adherence and observance of the law, "which Moses my servant commanded."

Confidence and Authority.

But Jehovah never leaves his own (v. 5), Matt. 28:20, nor does he leave man to blind fate or fortuitous circumstances. Therefore we read in verse 8 the counsel of Jehovah as to the method whereby Joshua and Israel may "prosper" (v. 7) or according to the margin "do wisely," viz., they shall meditate upon the books of the law. This verse is enough for the entire class session. The leader, be he preacher or teacher, who has any doubt about the word of God, or stands dumb before the empty tomb had better seek a new vocation for he is the apostle of a dying, disintegrating class or church and a decadent faith. The origin of man, the mystery of life, the destiny of the soul, demands the voice of confidence and authority not of uncertainty and doubt. True prosperity and wisdom are conditioned upon our taking the word of God as the man of our counsel, the light of our path, our daily meditation. The definite result of such a course is set before Joshua, and in addition he was promised the companionship (v. 9) of Jehovah every step of the way. It is interesting in this connection to remember that Joshua was associated with Moses in the first experience of war in the history of this young nation.

Conclusion. The greatest lesson before us at this time is that of continuity of the purposes of God. As great and important as Moses has been during his 40 years of leadership, yet he was not necessary. The instrument of the deliverance, direction and discipline, yes, the voice of God to Israel, the receiver of their complaints and of their confessions, yet now he has been removed. What a tremendous blank he must have left. Yet Israel is to go forward, there is to be no halting in its progress. God had been training men for 40 years, one of whose faith failed not at the sight of the giants, one who had fellowship with the old and is now to face the new. We recall the words of John Wesley, inscribed upon his memorial tablet in Westminster abbey, "God buries his workmen, but carries on his work." Every individual in the long succession of leaders has his appointed task, and as he is loyal completes that task thereby preparing the way for a new leader. The abiding principles that condition each man's success are loyalty and obedience.

The Golden Text is in substance thrice repeated. First, Joshua was to be strong and of good courage because of the work ahead of him (v. 6); second, he was to be strong and courageous in the observance of the law; and lastly he was to be strong and courageous in order to avoid the perils of fear and dismay which were to beset the path of advance (v. 9).

A study of the remainder of this chapter reveals not only the orderly response of the people but that the people, as well as God, also demanded of their leader that he should "be strong and of a good courage."

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Energetic Citizen.
"I shouldn't mind, myself, if they closed the 'pubs' a couple o' hours sooner. Wot I sez is, if a man ain't full by 'alf-past ten, 'e ain't trying."—London Punch.

River of Time.
Time is a sort of river of passing events, and strong is its current; no sooner is a thing brought into sight than it is swept by and another takes its place and this, too will be swept away.—Marcus Antoninus.

"Forget It."
If any desire becomes insatiable—and the desire to succeed may become so—there may result the most exhausting emotions. Frequent despair and depression, irritability and unreasonable anger may be frequent with a man who is unduly anxious to attain what he calls success. He will think too much about his mistakes unless some one dares to say to him, or he can say to himself, "Forget It!"

Circumstances Alter Cases.
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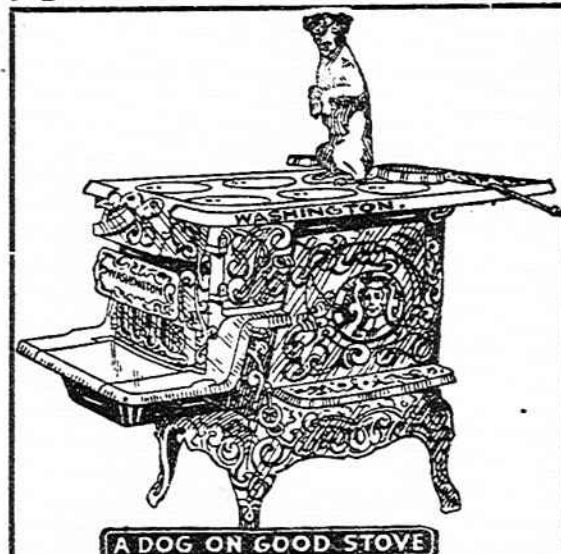
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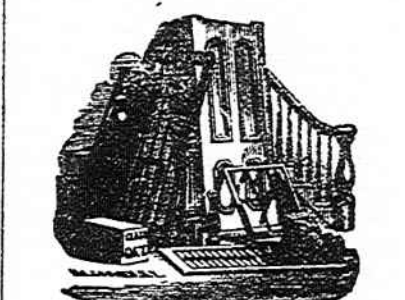
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